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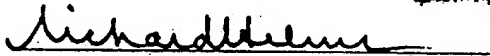
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NUMBER 11-10-66

Warning of Soviet Intention to Attack

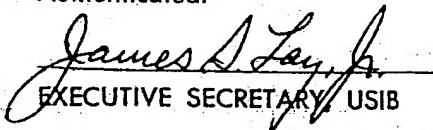
CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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Submitted by


DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

Concurred in by the
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1

WARNING OF SOVIET INTENTION TO ATTACK

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the warning which the intelligence community could provide of Soviet intentions to initiate either general hostilities against the US or hostilities limited to Europe, and trends in these warning capabilities over the next five years or so.

SCOPE NOTE

The main topic of this estimate is similar to that of its predecessor, NIE 11-61, 6 April 1961: i.e., warning of a Soviet attack on the US. In response to a request from US policymakers, we also consider the problem of warning of Soviet-initiated hostilities against US and allied forces in Europe. This is not to say that we believe that either form of attack is probable; on the contrary, as other NIEs indicate, we believe them highly unlikely.

We emphasize that the subject of this estimate is *strategic* warning, i.e., that which intelligence might provide prior to an actual attack. It is to be distinguished from *tactical* warning which might be obtained by such means as BMEWS, DEW line radars, etc., indicating that an attack has been initiated.

For the purposes of this estimate it is assumed that during the period under consideration no US-Soviet agreement on arms control or system of mutual inspection will be in effect.

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CONCLUSIONS

A. The basic problems for intelligence, as it relates to warning of Soviet attack, are to collect indications, to interpret them correctly, and to communicate the findings promptly and cogently to the decision-maker. No single source of information can be exclusively relied upon; warning must be based on constant examination of a wide range of Soviet activities, in an effort to detect and identify significant variations from normal behavior.

B. Warning is not likely to be either complete or unequivocal. Were the USSR to prepare to attack the US, some of the preparations would almost certainly be susceptible of detection by one or more means. But even when increased Soviet readiness is apparent, it will be difficult to know whether Moscow means to attack, to take a stiffer stand in a crisis, to deter, or to be prepared to defend and retaliate. For these reasons, the political climate will continue to be a critical factor in our analysis.

C. The chances of providing warning of an ICBM attack designed to achieve maximum surprise would be virtually nil. The chance of warning would increase as the planned weight of attack increased, and would be better than even in the case of a maximum weight, all-out attack.¹ In any case, intelligence could almost certainly give no *firm* warning of an intention to attack. Intelligence is not likely to give warning of *probable* Soviet intent to attack until a few hours before the attack, if at all. Warning of increased Soviet readiness, implying a *possible* intent to attack, might be given somewhat earlier.

D. If the Soviets sought to maximize surprise in an attack on Europe, they could launch a devastating first strike with MRBMs and IRBMs whose final preparation for the attack would not be detectable by present collection means. However, we believe that the Soviets would expect US retaliation and would probably make many of the same defensive preparations as in the case of an attack on the US, which might be detected.

¹ Rear Admiral Eugene B. Fluckey, USN, the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy, believes that any general hostilities launched by the Soviets against the US or NATO during the next five years would almost certainly be initiated by "a maximum weight, all-out attack," and hence that the chances of providing warning would be better than even.

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E. In the event of a conventional attack on Western Europe, chances of warning would be minimal if the USSR elected not to build up its forces in East Germany in advance. However, if the USSR undertook to build up forces in the GSFG, this and other more extensive preparations would probably become known to Western intelligence, though it might be difficult to interpret their significance. Moscow's plans would probably become known to at least some of its East European allies, and we think the chances are good that we would get some knowledge of Soviet intentions.

F. Over the next few years, the continuing shift from bombers to missiles as the primary arm of Soviet strategic attack forces will further reduce our ability to monitor those forces. On the other hand, improved collection systems and processing techniques will probably enable us to observe and analyze more types of activity on a more timely basis. On balance, we do not look for much change in the capability of intelligence to provide warning of Soviet attack on the US or on Western Europe.

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NOTE

The key problem raised by this estimate is the impact of advanced technology—most notably the ballistic missile—on Soviet attack capabilities, and the accompanying effects on the Intelligence Community's ability to give warning. Not only is warning time reduced, but some of the indicators which were considered most pertinent a few years ago, such as deployment of significant numbers of LRA aircraft to staging bases, may no longer be so relevant to a strategic attack. Indicators of the readying of missile forces would be much harder to detect, and if they were discernible at all, would offer much less lead-time. As indicated in this estimate, the Intelligence Community is aware of the need for special techniques devoted to collecting, evaluating, and correlating information about Soviet activities and behavior. In addition to the pursuit of existing methods, it is actively seeking ways to develop and exploit new technology for warning purposes. Its efforts include development of new technical collection systems and constant attention to keeping the list of indicators up-to-date and to making the warning system as responsive as possible to present and future needs.

DISCUSSION

I. THE NATURE OF THE WARNING PROBLEM

The Problem of Collecting Indications

1. The clearest indication of a Soviet intention to attack would come from direct access to dependable sources of information on the proceedings of the highest level Soviet decision-making bodies. But such access is highly unlikely, and if ever achieved it would risk exposure and elimination before the critical day of warning arrived. Moreover, information from a single highly placed source would always have to be questioned and cross-checked by simultaneous observation of a variety of other activities, especially in a matter so vital as warning.

2. In these circumstances, warning must stem from the collection and evaluation of information on a wide range of Soviet activities and behavior. Considering the extensive Soviet effort to prevent the collection of vital information about the USSR's military capabilities and activities, even indirect evidence of Soviet intentions and preparations will always be incomplete. Nevertheless, were the USSR to prepare to attack the US, some of the preparations would almost certainly be susceptible of detection by one or more means. Those items of information would not necessarily confirm a Soviet intention to attack, since they may also be consistent with an intention to take a stiffer stand in a crisis, to deter, or to be prepared to defend and then retaliate. Thus, the warning problem is one of collecting a quantity of fragmentary information, of evaluating and interpreting it in order to reach judgments about the USSR's intended course of action, and of presenting these judgments in a convincing manner.

3. To cope with the warning problem in these terms, the US Intelligence Community has developed techniques for collecting, evaluating, and correlating information about Soviet activities and behavior. As a result, a fair understanding of some norms in Soviet behavior has been acquired, and a knowledgeable effort is now applied to the problem of discerning apparent abnormalities which might signify Soviet preparations for war. This effort has included attempts to determine what general and specific preparations the USSR might make prior to initiating hostilities, to identify those preparations most susceptible to detection by intelligence, to direct collection assets towards promising sources of information, and to establish special channels for the rapid transmission and dissemination of information which may be pertinent to the warning problem. However, because of the impossibility of predicting in advance precisely what abnormalities would become apparent should the Soviets decide to attack, warning could never be derived automatically from existing or even improved mechanisms. It will always be the end product of a process of reasoning from evidence that can never be regarded as complete or completely unambiguous; it will therefore be a judgment of probability rather than an unequivocal warning of Soviet intent to attack.

4. Indications might be found in any or all of a wide variety of categories, ranging from specific Soviet preparations for a strike to apparent changes in the political climate. Historically, it is in the area of physical activities that intelligence has best been able to maintain surveillance and to recognize abnormalities in Soviet behavior.

5. Physical preparations undertaken some time before the initiation of war would offer the longest potential lead-time for warning, but in most cases would permit only the most general conclusions about Soviet readiness. It would be particularly difficult to derive conclusions about the pace of the preparations and the timing of the intended attack. Indications of last minute Soviet preparations would be much more significant, but many of these final preparations would be undertaken so close to the launching of the attack that there would be little time to obtain the information, to assess it, and to communicate warning to decision-making officials. Hence, the most specific warning which might be given by intelligence on the basis of Soviet physical preparations would probably come dangerously close to the moment of attack.

6. In addition to these preparations, intelligence might acquire evidence of Soviet activities which did not in themselves increase military readiness but which the USSR might undertake prior to the initiation of hostilities. Some examples are abnormally heavy censorship measures, changes in clandestine agent operations, urgent and simultaneous recall of key Soviet personnel in Western countries, and unusual restrictions on foreign nationals in the USSR. While such evidence might strengthen the warning derived from analysis of military preparations, it would not provide a convincing basis for warning in the absence of indications of increased readiness to attack.

The Problem of Interpretation

7. In reaching a warning judgment, intelligence must evaluate physical preparations and other activities in the context of the Soviet political posture. This context has to do with the state of affairs within the Soviet Union as well as the way the USSR is conducting its international affairs at the time: the vigor of its challenge to the West over various issues, the apparent degree of commitment of the Soviet leaders to various positions, and the political climate in high Soviet and East European circles. While the political context introduces vital evidence, it also adds complications to the warning problem. Soviet foreign policy initiatives, actions, and positions are themselves often difficult to interpret. For example, in September 1962, our assessment of the considerations that would deter Soviet policymakers from deploying offensive missiles to Cuba was both logical and erroneous. Nevertheless, evaluation of the political posture, ambiguous though it may be, is a vital ingredient in the interpretation of physical preparations, particularly with respect to reaching judgments about the Soviet intentions they may signify.

8. It is evident from the foregoing considerations that warning is not likely to be either complete or unequivocal. The more indications collected and

recognized by intelligence, and the more comprehensive the picture of Soviet capabilities and behavior available to intelligence, the better would be the basis for judging the Soviet course of action. But the sum of the available indications and knowledge would almost certainly not be conclusive as to Soviet intentions. Therefore, even under the most favorable circumstances, it is likely that intelligence could only arrive at a judgment that the probability of Soviet attack was high. Some indication of the form, scale, or time of attack might be ascertained from the character and pace of Soviet preparations, but here too there would be uncertainty.

9. In addition, at any given point in the enemy's course of preparation for attack, the Intelligence Community is likely to be considering a range of conflicting judgments as to the portent of enemy activities. This likelihood will be enhanced by the recognition that our data are incomplete and probably ambiguous, and by a general awareness of the consequences of erroneous judgment. In these circumstances, the warning formulated by intelligence might be equivocal or clouded by the statement of differing views.

10. Even if unequivocal warning of attack cannot be given, warnings of lesser degrees of certainty could provide a basis for critically important US political, military, or intelligence decisions. Preliminary warnings might be adequate to justify the belief that the USSR was prepared to take new risks in a crisis and that hence the US should, for example, intensify diplomatic moves, place US military forces at one or another stage of alert, or redirect intelligence collection activities. Such actions might lead the USSR to abandon its plan to attack. In this case, warning would have accomplished its fundamental purpose.

Communication of Warning

11. The process of warning is complete only when warning judgments given by intelligence are accepted as valid by decision-making elements of government. A warning judgment which is not believed by responsible policy officials is as ineffective as no warning at all. Since the postulated Soviet decision to attack would be a most portentous one, the US policymakers would rightly insist that warning judgments as to the degree of likelihood of attack should be well documented. Intelligence must, therefore, communicate its findings as lucidly and as cogently as possible.

II. EFFECT OF THE LEVEL OF INTERNATIONAL TENSION

Soviet Decision in a Period of Calm

12. It is possible to envisage a Soviet decision to attack the US, made well in advance. The Soviet leaders might conclude that they had acquired, e.g., by a technological breakthrough, a military superiority over the US so decisive as to permit them to defeat the US without receiving unacceptable damage in return, or they might conclude that the US was planning to attack the USSR and that their best chance of survival lay in attacking first.

13. A decision made well in advance would give the USSR a long period to prepare, to adopt measures of maximum secrecy, and to mount large-scale efforts to deceive the US as to Soviet intentions. On the other hand, it would give the US Intelligence Community time to collect a broad range of information which might progressively assume a meaningful pattern. Initially at least, such preparations as were detected would probably not have an emergency character and would probably be regarded as a normal development of Soviet military capabilities. At some point, however, the Soviet actions might be recognized by intelligence as variations from normal patterns of activity, either by analysis of the preparations themselves, or by the discovery of unusual Soviet secrecy or deception attempts. This would alert intelligence and would cause it to re-examine the accumulated indications. As the time of attack approached, actions of a last minute character might be observed which would increase our ability to give warning.

14. We can also conceive of a Soviet decision to attack on very short notice, also in the absence of any external atmosphere of rising tensions. Such a decision might stem from a fear that the US was about to attack the USSR or from some irrationality within the top Soviet leadership. In cases of this sort, Soviet preparations would be minimal and the time available for their detection would be very short. The chances of warning might rest heavily on the possibility that the Soviet military forces, themselves surprised, would fail to exercise appropriate security measures.

Soviet Decision in a Period of Tension

15. Another range of circumstances under which a Soviet decision to attack might be taken would involve responses to international crises or local conflicts which neither the USSR nor the US intended should lead to general war. The Soviet leaders might come to believe that an actual or threatened intervention in the USSR's sphere of vital interest could not be countered by limited means, or that the USSR had become engaged beyond retreat in some area where the Western Powers would be prepared to risk general war. In either case, the Soviet leaders might decide that general war was inevitable and that they should attack first.

16. Either situation would almost certainly be accompanied by a very high degree of political tension, which would in itself alert intelligence and could give rise to preliminary warning. However, the time period over which a crisis reached an acute stage could vary considerably, and this would affect the ability of intelligence to assemble a meaningful pattern of indications. If the crisis developed rapidly, and if Soviet military readiness was already advanced or if the Soviet leaders decided to attack with only minimum preparations, the indications obtained might be few. If, on the other hand, the USSR took longer to prepare and position its forces, further and more specific warning might be obtained from the pace and nature of the Soviet preparations.

17. Thus, in a period of rising tension, the number and variety of data collected would rise, but the difficulty of interpreting them would likewise increase. In analyzing Soviet activities, intelligence would have to recognize that the USSR might be carrying out military preparations, not on the basis of a firm decision to initiate general war, but for purposes of deterrence or in order to increase its defensive readiness and its ability to retaliate should the US attack. Analysis of the significance of the USSR's political and propaganda activities in this situation would be extremely difficult. The importance of a correct US estimate on this point would be very great, yet it would be particularly difficult to make such an estimate during a period of tension.

Level of Intelligence Alert

18. One significant effect of a period of tension, as it applies to the warning problem, would be the effect on the Intelligence Community itself. Since warning is a product of judgment, there are variable human factors which must be taken into account. Alertness would vary depending on the manner in which the crisis developed, its intensity, and its duration. There are many ways in which the alertness and effectiveness of intelligence increases under crisis conditions. For example, field reporting and intelligence analysis become sharply focused on the crisis situation, resources of the Intelligence Community are more closely integrated to deal with the crisis, and intelligence is increasingly disposed to consider whether current evidence indicates hostile intent. On the other hand, in the event of a long sustained crisis involving a high degree of tension, key personnel would be subjected to fatigue and strain. If, at one stage or another, apparently mistaken warning judgments had been made, intelligence might be more cautious about giving new warnings and decision-makers about accepting them.

19. Once a crisis situation arises, the volume of information increases markedly, thus confronting intelligence with a large number of reports, many from inadequately identified sources of uncertain reliability. There is also an increase in the number of reports from sources of known reliability. In these circumstances, information channels are likely to be overloaded, with resulting delays in the transmission, receipt, and assimilation of data. Analysts and policymakers alike will be inundated with material requiring review, evaluation, and decision. However, it is not possible for intelligence to suspend judgment until more complete and satisfactory evidence becomes available. For a variety of reasons, intelligence warnings in a developing crisis may be expressed with less confidence and hence be less credible to decision-makers.

III. WARNING EXPERIENCE IN RECENT CRISES

20. Since the last National Intelligence Estimate dealing with the subject of warning, the Berlin crisis of 1961 and the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 have given us concrete examples of the type and nature of some of the steps the Soviets might take in preparing to attack the US. At the same time, these crises have demonstrated how Soviet security, concealment, and deception practices can obscure our view of a developing situation. It is important to recognize, how-

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ever, that in both these situations the Soviet preparations probably fell far short of those we should expect in case they were to decide to make full-scale preparations for conflict with the US, and that there was a large element of bluff in their actions in both crises.

Berlin Crisis—1961

21. The military and political measures which the USSR took in the summer and fall of 1961 followed a period of two years or so during which Khrushchev had repeatedly stated his intention to obtain a Berlin settlement on his terms. From June 1961 on, a series of Soviet statements and actions made it clear that the USSR would seek to obtain a settlement that year. US intelligence, aware of the possibility of a confrontation, was thus more than normally alert to any Soviet preparedness measures, and collection and analysis resources were geared to the possibility that the USSR might resort to force to achieve its objective. In this atmosphere of crisis, many items of information were collected and closely analyzed which, in a period of lesser tension, might have gone undetected or been subjected to less intense review.

22. During the weeks preceding and following the closing of the Berlin sector borders on 13 August, there was a copious flow of information (and disinformation) concerning increased security measures, military exercises in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, mobilization and reinforcement plans, covert troop movements, and various other steps of the type which we would expect to see taken in an initial buildup for hostilities in Europe. In general, the timeliness of collection and evaluation of the information received concerning these activities was good, in part because many of the USSR's moves were overt or publicly announced for political reasons.

23. A notable exception, however, was the closing of the Berlin sector borders. Despite the extensive Western intelligence access to East Berlin and East Germany at the time, and despite our realization of the acuteness of the refugee problem, there were no specific indications that the sector borders would be closed as abruptly and in the manner they were. Particularly noteworthy from the standpoint of warning is the fact that the movement of Soviet and East German troops to positions surrounding the city, and of East German troops within East Berlin, were made so suddenly on 11 and 12 August that their extent and significance were not perceived until after the sector borders were closed. This action attests to the security of high-level Communist decisions and demonstrates the Communist ability to make a surprise move without the West gaining any specific warning, even in an area of priority Western intelligence collection activity.

Cuban Missile Crisis—1962

24. Unlike the Berlin situation, in which the US was aware of an impending confrontation, the Cuba situation did not become acutely critical until our 15 October discovery that strategic missiles had been deployed and launch facilities were under construction. The large Soviet shipments to Cuba before

that date had, of course, been observed and subjected to intensive intelligence collection and analytical efforts. Sizable movements of passenger vessels were also noted. However, the Cuban situation was generally regarded as one in which the Soviets, by providing Cuba with defensive weapons, sought to deter the US from attempting Castro's overthrow, rather than to pose a direct strategic threat to the US itself.

25. In addition to information concerning developments in Cuba, we also had a variety of indications concerning military activities in the USSR itself. These did not, however, point to any significant deployment of Soviet combat troops to Cuba, and indeed Soviet security was so effective that no reports were received concerning the movement of troops or military equipment to Soviet ports for such deployment. In short, intelligence was not able at the time to establish the interrelationship between activities observed in Cuba and those in the USSR sufficiently to permit warning of the full extent of Soviet readiness to confront the US with the Cuban missile challenge. []

26. For warning purposes, our general conclusions from the Berlin and Cuban crises are:

- a. The Intelligence Community's state of alert and its evaluation of the political context have a very important bearing on the promptness of reporting on indications and the interpretations placed upon them.
- b. During the Cuban crisis, intelligence was unable to determine the overall degree of readiness []
- c. The US probably can detect a high state of alert or combat-readiness of national or Soviet forces in Eastern Europe when this alert is widespread.
- d. The Soviets are adept in deception and their security is highly effective.

IV. EFFECT OF VARIOUS SOVIET ATTACK STRATEGIES

Maximum Surprise Attack

27. The principal means of concealing preparations for a maximum surprise attack would be the maintenance of seemingly normal patterns of activity, especially in the strategic attack forces themselves (ICBMs, long-range bomber aircraft, and missile submarines). If the initial Soviet strike was carried out entirely by ICBMs, our ability to derive warning from the activities of these forces would be minimal. The Soviet ICBM force is permanently deployed and is maintained at a high state of readiness. Final readying activity would not be extensive and would not be detectable by present collection means.

28. If the Soviets chose to add more weight to the initial attack without unduly jeopardizing the chances of surprise, the role of Soviet Long Range Aviation (LRA) could be restricted to use of those heavy bombers which could

be launched from home bases without prior maintenance standdown and without needing to stage through Arctic bases. The bombers could take off so as to penetrate the DEW line shortly after the ICBM attack. While the flight of some of the bombers northward might be detected, it is unlikely that any warning judgment would be based on this indication alone.

29. We believe that, if the Soviets were seeking to maximize surprise, they would not deploy numbers of submarines until after the ICBM attack was underway. At present, the few Soviet missile submarines on Atlantic and Pacific patrol stations are generally not deployed within range of potential US targets but patrol within two or three days transit time of potential launch areas.

30. Even if they sought maximum surprise, the Soviets, anticipating US retaliation, would probably take some preparatory steps in other elements of their military forces than those participating in the initial strikes. Such steps might include: readying air defense forces, deploying ground forces to forward areas, putting naval elements to sea, deploying tactical aircraft to advanced bases, moving key military command elements to alternate sites, etc. In addition, we believe that the USSR would undertake some measures in the civil defense field to provide some protection to its key personnel. Some of these steps might be detected but, in the absence of indications of unusual activity in the strategic attack forces, might be evaluated as exercises. Indeed, there is a good chance that Moscow would attempt to deceive us by announcing that they were exercises.

Maximum Weight Attack

31. In planning a strike in which weight of attack was paramount, the Soviets would have to take a good many steps to enhance the readiness of their forces. More LRA aircraft, including some medium bombers, would probably participate, and a maintenance standdown of several days probably would be carried out. Some of the aircraft probably would be staged through Arctic bases. More missile submarines would probably put to sea and head for launch positions off the US. Various other elements of the military forces would be brought to maximum readiness and necessary deployments carried out, probably including preparations for a near simultaneous attack in Europe. This range of activities would give intelligence its best chance of detecting enough indications to assert that a high level of military preparedness was being achieved in the USSR and to render some judgment as to the probability of attack.

A Combination of Surprise and Weight

32. There could of course be various levels of attack falling between the maximum surprise and the maximum weight types. In these cases, the indications of impending attack probably would be random and imprecise, but in general, intelligence would have a better chance of providing warning than in the case of a maximum surprise attack.

V. PRESENT CHANCES OF WARNING

33. Because of our limited ability to provide warning from observing the activities of the various Soviet strategic attack forces, it is likely that such warning as we can provide will be based on a combination or series of indications stemming from activities within various other elements of Soviet political and military power. So far as military activities are concerned, we are more likely to detect events in Eastern Europe and the western USSR than those which occur elsewhere.

34. The degree of validity accorded to indications by intelligence and by policy officials would also depend on the extent to which these indications were plausibly explicable in terms of Soviet courses of action other than an attack on the US. If warning were derived solely from a mixture of indications from, say, forces in Eastern Europe, civil defense, and partial mobilization, it would in theory be no less valid than warning derived from observed preparations of bombers and ballistic missiles. The latter would be more specific and dramatic, but would be less likely to be available in time. The former would be more likely to be timely; it would also be more ambiguous. But analysis of indications in all these categories might permit intelligence to give successive warnings with mounting confidence.

35. The chances of providing warning of an ICBM attack designed to achieve maximum surprise would be virtually nil. The chance of warning would increase as the planned weight of attack increased, and would be better than even in the case of a maximum weight, all-out attack.² In any case, intelligence could almost certainly give no *firm* warning of an intention to attack. Intelligence is not likely to give warning of *probable* Soviet intent to attack until a few hours before the attack, if at all. Warning of increased Soviet readiness, implying a *possible* intent to attack, might be given somewhat earlier.

VI. FUTURE TRENDS

36. Over the next few years, the Soviets will come to rely even more on ICBMs for initial attack. They will probably establish a pattern of routine submarine patrols in potential launch areas off the US coasts. The net effect will be to reduce still further the likelihood of our providing warning based on the activities of strategic attack force elements.

37. We believe, however, that we will retain a fairly good capability to monitor activities of Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces in forward Eastern European areas. We can likewise probably continue to monitor activity within the Soviet

² Rear Admiral Eugene B. Fluckey, USN, the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy, believes that any general hostilities launched by the Soviets against the US or NATO during the next five years would almost certainly be initiated by "a maximum weight, all-out attack," and hence that the chances of providing warning would be better than even.

strategic defense force at about our present level. The advent of an ABM warning and defensive system within the USSR may offer another source of indications. However, we cannot assess its value for warning until we know more about the performance characteristics and operational techniques of the system.

38. The political environment obtaining at the time is, and will continue to be, a critical factor in our analysis of indications. Depending on the circumstances, it could strengthen or impede the warning judgment. [

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39. Because of the strict control exercised by Communist governments on official US representatives abroad, we anticipate little improvement in the ability of such sources to contribute to the warning problem. Well-placed clandestine sources could materially contribute to the determination of Soviet intent. But they are a rarity within Communist countries, and we cannot count on such a source becoming available and being in place when needed for the purpose of warning.

40. It is likely that improvements in intelligence collection and data handling systems will enable us to observe and analyze a broader spectrum of activity on a more timely basis. In some cases, however, a considerable period of testing of these systems and analysis of the data collected must be undergone before we can gain a full appreciation of the benefit to be derived from these improvements. Nevertheless, warning judgments will, of necessity, remain the product of examination of a wide range of indications. On balance, we do not look for much change in the capability of intelligence to provide warning of Soviet attack.

VII. WARNING OF SOVIET-INITIATED HOSTILITIES IN EUROPE

41. If the Soviets sought to maximize surprise in an attack on Europe, they could launch a devastating first strike with MRBMs and IRBMs whose final preparation for the attack would not be detectable by present collection means. However, we believe that the Soviets would expect US retaliation and would probably make many of the same defensive preparations as in the case of an attack on the US, with essentially the same chances of detection and warning.

42. In the event of a conventional attack on Western Europe, chances of warning would be minimal if the USSR elected not to build up its forces in East Germany in advance. However, if the Soviets undertook an advance buildup, this and other more extensive preparations would probably become known to Western intelligence. In addition to activity in GSFG itself, we would expect a reinforcement of the lines of communication through Poland and Czechoslovakia, military requisitioning of rolling stock and other forms of transportation, a considerable increase in the movement of supplies from the USSR, a tightening of security measures, stepped-up civil defense preparations, etc.

43. The danger that warning might not be given would arise, in our view, not from failure to detect many of these measures but from the difficulty of interpreting their significance. In these circumstances, the likelihood of warning of attack, as well as the timeliness of any such warning, would depend on the extent and speed of the buildup and the variety of other factors discussed in this estimate. For example, if the Soviet preparations were undertaken in a period of relative political calm, and gradually over a period of months, they might be regarded only as a long-term increase in capabilities. If undertaken in a period of rising tensions, even a fairly large-scale augmentation of Soviet forces in East Germany might be misinterpreted as defensive, or as intended to deter the West through political pressure.

44. Finally, the last minute movement of troops into offensive positions could be masked as an exercise. Soviet military doctrine stresses the desirability of thus disguising preparations for attack. The scale of logistic preparations will always be higher for combat than for an exercise, but the facts may be very difficult for intelligence to determine. Accordingly, the chances of timely warning will be heavily dependent on whether the scope and significance of earlier preparations have been recognized and reported as potentially offensive in nature. If not, warning that an attack may be imminent is much less likely, particularly under the rigid security measures which the USSR may be expected to employ.

45. The chances of obtaining indications for warning are enhanced by the growing independence of the East European states in both political and military matters, and by their demands for more discussion and mutual agreement on Warsaw Pact planning and the role of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. The USSR could not mount an attack on Western Europe without the knowledge of at least some of its allies. The Pact forces would have to have some role in the attack—if only the maintenance of internal security and defense—and some knowledge of large-scale and unusual military preparations and troop and supply movements could not be concealed from many East Europeans. We think the chances are good that through such channels we would get some knowledge of Soviet intentions.

46. In considering the problem of warning of a Soviet attack limited to Europe, a final cautionary note should be emphasized. Given the likelihood that the Soviets would take preparatory steps to ready the USSR for a retaliatory attack by the US, it would be virtually impossible to judge whether these preparations indicated an attack limited to Europe or an attack directed against the US.

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